

U.S. National Commission For UNESCO Update



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Highlights

In June, the U.S. National Commission for UNESCO held its first annual conference in 20 years. The meetings, which took place June 6 and 7 at Georgetown University, included a plenary address by Secretary of Education Margaret Spellings, as well as speeches and panel discussions by a number of government officials. Mrs. Laura Bush hosted the commissioners at a White House reception, and commissioners were also hosted for a dinner at the State Department.

The current focus is on the upcoming [33rd General Conference](#) at UNESCO in Paris, which will be held October 3 to October 21.

U.S. National Commission Annual Meeting

[First Lady Laura Bush](#), who serves as the honorary ambassador for the U.N. Decade of Literacy, for which UNESCO is the lead international agency, kicked off the National Commission's annual meeting with a private breakfast reception for commissioners at the White House. She spoke to commissioners about the importance of education and the U.S. engagement in UNESCO, and thanked her guests for their service to the U.S. government in their roles as National Commission members.

Following the White House event, National Commission members moved to Georgetown University. Opening the plenary sessions, Marguerite Sullivan, Executive Director of the U.S. National Commission, and Richard T. Miller, Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for Economic and Global Issues, gave an overview of UNESCO, U.S. goals within the organization, and the role of commission members.

Sullivan and Miller were followed by five plenary speakers, who addressed topics within UNESCO's competence areas of Natural Science and Engineering, Education, Social and Human Sciences, Culture, and Communications and Information.



John Marburger, Science Advisor to President Bush and Director of the [White House Office of Science and Technology Policy](#), described UNESCO as a capacity building organization to which the U.S. natural science

initiatives and research and development can greatly contribute. He noted that President Bush has requested \$57 billion in fiscal year 2006 for research and development, which is a sum nearly 100 times larger than UNESCO's \$610 million bi-annual budget.

The technologies important to the U.S. future economic strength are the same as those in which developing countries are interested. He said, "Like every other developed country, we've identified biotechnology, nanotechnology, information technology, so-called three-convergent technologies, as important."

These priorities have relevance to the themes of sustainable development and capacity building, and therefore Marburger said the U.S. is investing considerable funds in areas important to UNESCO's mission.

"Part of our responsibility as commissioners is to help UNESCO perform its appropriate role at an appropriate level of engagement with the projects that it stimulates," he said. "Scope and impact can only be achieved by a small organization, by catalyzing productive interactions between developed and developing nations."



Bruce Cole, Chairman of the [National Endowment for Humanities](#), focused on education and humanities and accentuated their relationship to freedom. "The right to education is essential for any society that values freedom," he said. "UNESCO recognizes this by promoting full and equal opportunity for education as a fundamental human right."

Humanities education, "helps form the bedrock of civic understanding and civic order," Cole added. He applauded UNESCO for its efforts to improve teacher training. "It's an incontrovertible fact that teachers cannot teach what they do not know," he said.

A new National Endowment for Humanities program -- [We the People](#) -- aims at enhancing the teaching, study and public understanding of American history and culture. "While the NEH works to inform Americans about our nation's past and principles," he said, "we also seek to better understand the full human story, a story whose setting stretches far beyond our coasts and our experience."



Edmund Pellegrino, Professor Emeritus at [Georgetown Medical Center](#) and member of UNESCO's International Bioethics Committee (IBC), said, "35 years ago, medical ethics, which is a 2500-year-old discipline, began to be changed by the enormous unprecedented growth of biological knowledge from professional medical ethics to bioethics so that now it embraces the ethical issues that have to do with all of human life and the biosphere." Pellegrino related this area of study to UNESCO's draft Declaration on Universal Norms for Bioethics.



After opening his remarks with a recitation of Shakespeare's Sonnet 18, Dana Gioia, Chairman of the [National Endowment for the Arts](#), outlined fundamental differences between the approach of the U.S. government and other nations to the support of arts and culture. The majority of U.S. arts funding comes from the private sector, whereas internationally governments are the primary patrons. Gioia traced the roots of these policy differences back to the history of national identity. While acknowledging the cultural stability promoted in the approach of other nations, he commended the decentralized American approach as one that "strengthens artistic diversity and guarantees freedom of expression."

In contrast with the traditional ministry of culture charged with defining and protecting a nation's cultural patrimony, Gioia described the American model as unique in four ways: (1) the arts must compete in the market place, thus making the arts more independent and innovative, (2) the arts are an expression of the private, not public, sector; of individualism, not community, (3) the arts often stand in opposition to official authority, not in support of it, and (4) the arts receive limited government funding, but without censorship or state control of content.

"Most nations see cultural protectionism as positive. But the U.S., given our heritage, sees it as counterproductive to cultural vitality," Gioia stated. "What you have are two great goals. Most of the world looks on stability as the goal. The U.S. looks on dynamism, vitality as the goal."

In conclusion, Gioia urged the U.S. to recognize the value of a world model concerned with "the vulnerability of smaller nations to cultural hegemony, and the importance and difficulty of ensuring growth and vitality in developing nations." Similarly, he stated other nations should consider adopting models of best practices from the successful American system built upon public-private partnerships.



James Billington, Librarian of Congress, proposed that the National Commission adopt a World Digital Library as a cross-cutting project. "The time may be right for our country's delegation to consider introducing to the world body a proposal for the cooperative building of a world digital library. This will be a new type of activity that could give UNESCO a fresh start and could provide win/win opportunities for everybody."

"It would hold out the promise of bringing people closer together precisely by celebrating the depth and uniqueness of different cultures in a single, shared global undertaking," he said. According to Billington, the project could be designed along the lines of the [Library of Congress Digitized Library](#), "[American Memory](#)." It is a collection of historical images, maps, sound recordings, movies, manuscripts, and other documents, that are actively collected in 487 languages.



In a luncheon address, Françoise Rivière, Assistant Director-General for UNESCO, called, the return of the United States to membership of UNESCO "a momentous development." She cited examples of how UNESCO has made a difference both locally and globally. UNESCO is working internationally, she said, with scientific institutions, to create a global early warning system in response to the December 2004 tsunami. Following the fall of the Taliban, UNESCO experts worked with the Kabul Museum to help preserve Afghanistan's rich culture. In education, UNESCO has a priority of Literacy and Education for All, for which new and innovative ideas will continue to be needed for this challenging endeavor.

Regarding UNESCO's celebration of its 60th Anniversary, Rivière, said, "all these [U.N.] organizations were designed to address problems linked to the post Second World War and then the Cold War situation. Fifteen years after the collapse of the Berlin Wall, it appears that this era has come to a close and we are entering a totally new context in which... 'big problems are increasingly becoming cross-sectoral'."

She urged commissioners to use UNESCO as a platform to present an accurate image of American values and ideals to the world and to mobilize the American academic and scientific community to engage in the organization's work. Rivière asked the commissioners to help UNESCO become the model "paradigm of a 21st century organization."



Acting Assistant Secretary for the Bureau of International Organization Affairs Philo Dibble and U.S. National Commission for UNESCO Executive Director Marguerite Sullivan hosted the commissioners at a dinner in the

[Benjamin Franklin Diplomatic Reception Room.](#)

Ambassador Louise Oliver, U.S. Permanent Representative to UNESCO, and Ambassador Shirin Tahir-Kheli, Senior Advisor to the Secretary of State on United Nations Reform, addressed the group. Tahir-Kheli discussed the U.S. re-entry into UNESCO, and Oliver talked about the Mission's first year and the re-engagement of the U.S. in UNESCO.

Oliver also spoke at the plenary during the second day of the conference.



In the keynote address of the concluding plenary session, U.S. [Secretary of Education Margaret Spellings](#) commended Commission members for their commitment to the shared goals of UNESCO and the United States in education and asked for their continued support to overcome challenges in achieving universal literacy and Education for All.

"The U.S. and UNESCO are ready to move forward – together," she said, "We're ready to improve literacy throughout the world – to promote high standards and quality – to ensure social inclusion and access – and to stress the importance of sound measurement and data."

She commended UNESCO's reform efforts and stressed the commitment of the U.S. to look inward toward reforming its own education system; "We knew we had to change—to bring back high standards, accountability, and a renewed focus on social inclusion. And change we have—led by the [No Child Left Behind Act](#)."

Spellings noted that a strong education system is critical not only for the growth and success of the country, but for the freedom of its people. "As education takes hold at all levels of society around the world," she said, "so does the desire



Secretary of Education Margaret Spellings addresses the U.S. National Commission for UNESCO. Source: U.S. Dept. of Ed.

for empowerment and liberty."

"We are looking," Spellings said, "not to the past, but to the bright future – ready to help promote locally developed solutions that respect a country's culture and sovereignty. And ready to set a good example here at home by ensuring that no child is left behind."



[Education Committee](#)

John J. DeGioia, President of Georgetown University and Coordinator of the Education Committee, and Robert Martin, Director of the Institute for Museum and Library Services and Vice-Coordinator of the Education Committee, led panel and committee discussions over two days.

Chris Doherty, Chief of Staff to the Deputy Secretary of the U.S. Department of Education, provided an overview of federal government support for literacy, which has more than tripled since the advent of No Child Left Behind. He spoke about the Department's [Reading First](#) program, which provides additional funds to poor and academically underperforming schools to implement programs based on sound scientific research.

"What Reading First is doing" Doherty said, "is more than tripling the funding, but more than just additional funds, we are putting research and research implications first and foremost in the schools." The final blueprint for implementation is different in each state. An iterative review process matches experts in the literacy field with state officials to determine the best approaches in context, he said. When asked about the specific contribution universities and colleges can make to advancing literacy, Doherty noted that the scientific knowledge now available on reading and how children learn is not typically integrated into traditional teacher training programs. He emphasized the importance of effective teacher training and urged university presidents to align teacher preparation programs with the latest scientific research.

Tom Farrell, Deputy Assistant Secretary for Academic Programs in the State Department's Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs (ECA), described a joint OECD/UNESCO initiative, which will result in voluntary guidelines for quality assurance in the provision of higher education across borders. He said the U.S. worked to ensure that national sovereignty was respected and that "the benefits that U.S. higher education provides can be shared widely with people throughout the world."

Farrell also provided information on ECA's efforts to serve younger audiences through Youth Exchange programs, promote leadership development for undergraduate and graduate students, and to provide professional development for primary and secondary school teachers and

administrators who will be implementing much-needed literacy and education programs in post-conflict countries and other vital regions and communities. He also discussed the [Fulbright New Century Scholars program](#), which will engage 20 international scholars of renown and 10 American leaders in the area of university and higher education in collaborative research over the course of the next year. UNESCO has been asked to send a senior official to participate with observer status. According to Farrell, the scholars “will look at quality in higher education, the globalization of higher education, access and equity issues, and produce a framework and a paper that we hope will not only guide national leaders but guide the leadership in UNESCO.”

John Grayzel, Director of the Office of Education at USAID, summarized UNESCO’s Education for All (EFA) initiative, which has six major goals: expanding access to early childhood education, ensuring universal completion, promoting learning and life skills for young people and adults, expanding adult literacy by 50 percent, eliminating gender disparities, and enhancing educational quality. He emphasized that these goals are interdependent.

“We are actually faced with an anomaly that if we succeed in the universal primary completion, we may end up with a tremendous bulge of children who can read, can add, but they don’t have the skills for true employment, and there aren’t secondary schools to send them to,” he said.

Grayzel encouraged the Committee to engage all UNESCO sectors in the work of EFA. “It is important to realize that EFA is a global initiative and...we have constantly been pressuring UNESCO to bring in other people like the private sector much more dynamically into EFA.”

USAID’s education strategy centers on “basic education,” such as literacy, and activities that build on basic education and refine skills, characterized as “beyond basic education,” he said.

Grover “Russ” Whitehurst, Director of the Institute of Education Sciences at the U.S. Department of Education and a member of the board of the UNESCO Institute for Statistics, stressed the importance of having reliable data when making decisions about how best to optimize student learning. “Almost everyone who is in the business of trying to affect the lives of people and children goes into that business with the intent to do good. But the intent sometimes is not realized. Without the evidence you will not know that,” he said.

Regarding curriculum, he said, “It is important as we try to affect literacy and the training of the teachers to make sure that we’re providing content that in fact is aligned with goals.” He emphasized the importance of professional

development and standards and accountability and noted that incentives for students and teachers can be powerful ways to enhance attendance and performance.

Following and during the presentations, commissioners discussed the topics presented.

The Education Committee came up with several proposals for the upcoming year, including:

- To assist the U.S. in promoting literacy as a contribution to the U.N. Literacy Decade and UNESCO’s Education for All effort.
- To support the idea proposed by the Librarian of Congress of a World Digital Library providing online the heritage of different cultures that could be used to promote literacy and skills development.
- To explore how the uniquely American model of community college education could be useful in addressing global education needs.

The Committee was also asked to consider how the U.S. Associated Schools Project Network, a program affiliated with UNESCO and currently run by the non-profit organization InterConnections 21, could be associated with the National Commission. Committee members agreed to seek the advice and input of the Department of Education before making a recommendation.

Natural Sciences and Engineering Committee

Arden Bement, Vice Coordinator of the Natural Sciences and Engineering Committee, facilitated the panel and the subsequent discussions.

Gene Whitney, White House Office of Science and Technology Policy (OSTP), provided an overview of UNESCO’s Science Sector, which is allocated approximately 20 percent of the UNESCO core budget. He noted that UNESCO’s priority programs in water and associated ecosystems align with U.S. priorities. Whitney also summarized the status of UNESCO’s new International Basic Sciences Program and discussed the [capacity building resolution](#) proposed by the U.S. and recently passed at the April UNESCO Executive Board meeting.

Brigadier General John (Jack) J. Kelly (USAF, Retired), Deputy Undersecretary of Commerce for Oceans and Atmosphere, provided historical background on the Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission (IOC). He noted the strong U.S. support for the Integrated [Global Ocean Observing System](#) (GOOS), regional and international data sharing through the International Oceanographic Data and Information Exchange Program, and the cooperation between the World Meteorological Organization (WMO) and the IOC. He also outlined IOC’s

role in coordinating the international efforts to develop a tsunami early warning system for the Indian Ocean and noted the U.S. support for a multi-hazard system implemented through the Global Earth Observation System of Systems (GEOSS) framework.

The [International Hydrological Program](#) (IHP) and its relationship to other U.N. water related programs were discussed by Verne Schneider, Chief of International Water Resources Branch, U.S. Geological Survey. He described the program as evolving toward an ecosystem level focus in Phase VII, which will have stronger interaction with the UNESCO Ecological and Earth Sciences Division. The U.S. has been continuously involved with the IHP since its inception in 1975, providing both technical and extra-budgetary financial support.

Scott May, Senior Advisor, Mathematics and Science Initiative, U.S. Department of Education, outlined parallels between the UNESCO Education for All and the U.S. No Child Left Behind Act initiatives. He also noted similarities between the Department of Education's Math and Science Initiative and UNESCO's programs in both the Education and Science Sectors.

John Dennis, Deputy Chief Scientist of the U.S. National Parks Service, provided historical background on both UNESCO's [Man and the Biosphere](#) (MAB) Program and U.S. participation in the program.

Following and during the presentations, commissioners discussed the topics presented.

The Natural Sciences and Engineering Committee proposed several directions for developing initiatives, among them:

- To support the U.S. Government's efforts to be elected to the UNESCO Governing Council of the IHP.
- To explore opportunities worldwide to build capacity for providing potable water.
- To facilitate increased public awareness of multi-hazard early warning systems and to advise on data sharing needs and technologies for IOC activities.
- To recommend science-based initiatives in capacity building and sustainable development, with measurable outcomes, and to develop a cross-sectoral program especially between science and education.
- To look into the MAB program and sites.

Social and Human Sciences

Jim Kelly, Coordinator of the Social and Human Sciences Committee, introduced panelists, who gave presentations

about UNESCO's Declaration on Universal Norms on Bioethics, human rights within the U.N. system, civic education and democracy education.

O. Carter Snead, General Counsel for the [President's Council on Bioethics](#), talked about the history and current status of the Draft Declaration on Universal Norms on Bioethics. Snead explained that the U.S. government had several concerns with early drafts of the declaration, and the process through which these drafts were developed. Specific concerns included the proposed definition of bioethics and other key terms, and the noticeable absence of any reference to respect for human life as a bioethical principle. Snead commented that the U.S. would continue to participate actively in negotiation of the draft declaration. It is expected that a draft text of the bioethics declaration will be forwarded to UNESCO's General Conference in October 2005 for consideration and possible acceptance.

Mark Lagon, Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for International Organization Affairs, educated the members of the committee about the human rights system within the United Nations, including the structure, mission, and limitations of the U.N. Commission on Human Rights. He said the current structure of the U.N. human rights system does not effectively address human rights issues in today's world and emphasized the need for reform. He noted that the credibility of the U.N. Commission on Human Rights has been questioned by many, and said it is problematic that Sudan and Zimbabwe were recently elected to the Commission despite their track record with human rights.

Lagon distinguished the norm-setting role of the U.N. Commission on Human Rights from UNESCO's role in implementing human rights initiatives adopted by the U.N. "The era of norm setting needs to be succeeded by an era that increasingly looks at how to improve human rights on the ground." While he acknowledged U.N. Secretary-General Kofi Annan's proposed reforms to create a structure for programmatic work are a step forward in the right direction for the U.N. system, Lagon proposed UNESCO could make additional significant contributions in human rights education and democracy education.

Rita Foy Moss, Program Officer, [Office of Safe and Drug Free Schools](#), U.S. Department of Education, described civic education programs. Moss said that the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 includes programs to educate U.S. students about the Constitution and to improve civic education exchanges between the U.S. and newly democratized countries. She added that The Corporate and Civic Education and Economic Education Exchange Program engages American organizations to assist emerging democracies with tailoring civic education curriculum to specific cultures, teacher training and textbook translation.

Robert LaGamma, Executive Director of the Council of the Community of Democracies and U.S. National Commission for UNESCO member, discussed the growth of democracy education and its important role in establishing stable democracies around the world. LaGamma said that after oppressive governments have been overthrown, the difficult but crucial task of developing a society that can sustain democracy begins. “The time has come for sustained, coordinated, energetic and imaginative effort, working with UNESCO, to promote democracy education worldwide,” he said. LaGamma also recommended UNESCO help the Arab world publish their own works to increase the exchange of ideas in the region.

Following and during the presentations, commissioners discussed the topics presented.

The Commissioners of the Social and Human Science Committee recommended several proposals for the upcoming year:

- To recommend the U.S. Government secure a Declaration on Universal Norms of Bioethics that is limited to human life bioethics and respects the inherent value of human life; is a set of general principles; and is nonobligatory
- To support the U.S. position on the negotiations of the Declaration on Universal Norms of Bioethics
- To strengthen UNESCO’s work in civic, democracy, and human rights education
- To define “civic education,” “democracy education,” and “human rights education” to frame further discussions properly
- To monitor recent efforts to reform the UNESCO’s Management of Social Transformations (MOST) program to ensure that social science research used to support policies in developing and post-conflict countries be evidence-based, not subjective
- To work with the Education Committee to provide advice about civic education and human rights education initiatives
- To work with the Communications and Information Committee to provide advice about democracy and human rights promotion initiatives

Culture

Frank Hodsoll, Vice-Coordinator of the Culture Committee, facilitated the presentations and discussions at the Culture Committee breakout sessions.

Marta de la Torre, Director of Museum Studies, Florida International University, described her work on the U.S.-funded UNESCO initiative to build capacity in conservation of objects in 11 developing countries. Each country has received approximately \$250,000 for projects. They vary

from the preservation of Ashanti Kante Textiles in Ghana to the preservation of the endangered collection in the National Museum in Kabul. Challenges faced by museums and conservationists include inadequate facilities for display and storage, lack of inventories, and illicit trafficking.

Maria Kouroupas, Director of the Cultural Heritage Center at the Department of State, spoke about UNESCO’s 1970 *Convention on the Means of Prohibiting and Preventing the Illicit Import, Export and Transfer of Ownership of Cultural Property*. Under the convention, the U.S. government enters into bilateral agreements with the countries that have requested assistance in protecting their cultural heritage against looting and illicit trafficking and helps countries build capacity to preserve their heritage. Under such a bilateral agreement, El Salvador was able to re-establish its National Museum that was destroyed in an earthquake. The U.S. provided technical expertise in museum security, conservation and exhibit design.

Jane Cowley, Foreign Affairs Officer at the Department of State, spoke about cultural diversity and U.S. concerns with UNESCO’s *Draft Convention on the Protection of Cultural Contents and Artistic Expressions*. The current text is severely flawed. She explained that this draft fails to address the United States’ concern with actually promoting cultural diversity, instead focusing narrowly on trade. The failure of this draft to appropriately define cultural diversity and cultural expressions raises several concerns, including, whose diversity will this affect? The Convention defines culture at the national level at the expense of addressing the need to promote diversity and multi-culturalism within countries. The draft also uses overly broad and vague definitions of “cultural industries” and “cultural activities, goods and services.” These terms are so broadly defined, they might be read by some as extending to virtually any service, good, or other product that might be seen as related to a cultural expression, and are therefore meaningless in the effort to promote culture. Finally, the operative provisions of the Convention could potentially be mischaracterized as providing a broad authorization to Parties to impose an unlimited range of trade restrictive measures. The U.S. looks forward to the opportunity to continue the negotiations and trying to achieve consensus on these and other issues.

Joe Wilson, Chairman of the National Council for the Traditional Arts, spoke on his work in Lowell, Massachusetts, a historic factory town that was suffering from economic depression. Backed by investment in cultural preservation and partnerships in arts presentations, the town developed an annual arts festival that has returned the town to life and is still strong after 19 years. Wilson also shared his experience with festival organizers in Indonesia and other countries.

Paul Hoffman, Deputy Assistant Secretary, Fish and Wildlife and Parks, Department of Interior, National Parks Service, told the Commissioners that the U.S. was planning to run for the World Heritage Committee.

Timothy Whalen, Director of the Getty Conservation Institute, spoke on Getty's extensive conservation efforts and the importance of local capacity building for this work. He gave the example of Getty Conservation Institute's work in Mogao Grottoes in western China where it worked with the local community in long-and short-term plans in conservation, including training in site management techniques and developing conservation plans. Whalen also emphasized the importance of long-term partnerships to successful conservation projects.

Following and during the presentations, commissioners discussed the topics presented.

During the meeting, the Culture Committee also took time to honor Russell Train, who was the head of the Environmental Protection Agency during the Nixon Administration and was a chief architect of the World Heritage Convention.

The Culture Committee agreed that an overarching goal of UNESCO projects should be to devote more time and effort to capacity building and tangible outcomes (versus discussions and meetings) and that UNESCO management and budget should be oriented to this end. Specific recommendations included:

- Support for U.S. election to the World Heritage Committee.
- Encouragement of host countries meeting basic standards in preserving and managing World Heritage sites.
- Opposition to UNESCO's *Draft Convention on the Protection of Cultural Contents and Artistic Expressions* in its current form.
- Promotion of cultural diversity through assisting other countries to develop their own cultural industries.
- Support for UNESCO's new program on the conservation of movable objects through development of technical and management capacity of museums and conservation programs in the assisted countries.
- Greater UNESCO recognition and use of American private organizations.

Communications and Information

Mark Bench, Coordinator of the Communications and Information Committee, facilitated the panel and the subsequent discussions.

Ambassador David Gross, the U.S. Coordinator for [International Communications and Information Policy](#), updated the commissioners on the World Summit for the Information Society (WSIS), which is being conducted in two phases. The first was in Geneva in December 2003, and the second will be in Tunisia in November 2005. While it is not yet certain what role UNESCO will play in this issue, he said, which is being coordinated by the International Telecommunications Union (ITU), Gross felt that the first phase produced a good set of consensus documents, including both a declaration of principles and a plan of action. There are points in the documents that reaffirm the importance of rule of law, transparency, and private sector leadership. Gross feared that as the second phase approached, there would be a natural tendency for nations to want to relitigate press freedom and other issues that were accomplished during the first phase.

James Dempsey, Executive Director for the [Center for Democracy and Technology](#), addressed the issue of technology and democracy, particularly with respect to the Internet. Dempsey said the Internet is important for economics, human development, and democratization. The Center for Democracy and Technology works with reformers in developing and transitioning countries on the question of how the Internet should be supported, grow, and fulfill its potential. Dempsey stressed the importance of creating legal frameworks that will allow the technology to flourish.

Mark Koenig, a Senior Media Advisor with the [Office of Democracy and Governance at the U.S. Agency for International Development](#), discussed the effectiveness of international information and media programs. "[USAID's] in the middle," he said. "We attempt to take these general principles, find good implementing organizations, and create assistance programs at primarily the bilateral level, country-by-country, to help...develop free and independent media systems." USAID cooperates with many organizations on issues of journalism training, media business development, media law, and outreach. He cited UNESCO as one of these organizations with which USAID cooperates.

Ann Cooper, Executive Director for the [Committee to Protect Journalists](#), spoke of press freedoms worldwide. She commented on the progress that the UNESCO has made in this regard over the last 20 years. "In the 1980s, our press freedom community vigorously fought UNESCO, she said, "because of the organization's anti-press freedom efforts. Our community vigorously supported the United States withdrawal from the body. Now, the U.S. has rejoined a reformed UNESCO whose actions and policies aim at promoting media development and press freedom, rather than stifling it, and that is a significant and very welcome change."

Following and during the presentations, commissioners discussed the topics presented.

The Communications and Information Committee made several recommendations, including:

- UNESCO should consider facilitating a world digital library, developed on the basis of free and open information flow, as contained in Article 19 of the 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights.
- UNESCO should continue to participate actively in the World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS), and following the Summit, become actively involved in the implementation of freedom of the press, expression and Internet governance issues that arise in the Summit.
- The Commission should issue a statement prior to the WSIS in November emphasizing the importance of press freedom, freedom of expression and Internet governance commensurate with the [statement of the global Coordinating Committee of Press Freedom Organizations](#), dated 1 May 2004 in Belgrade.
- The U.S. delegation to UNESCO should support holding the line on the UNESCO overall \$610,000,000 two-year budget, to focus on core programs and facilitate the removal of ineffective and marginal activities.



At the conclusion of the plenary on the second day of the conference, Ambassador Louise Oliver spoke to the group. She thanked the committees for their recommendations and spoke about the important role that the National Commission plays in the U.S. involvement in UNESCO. She further encouraged commissioners to seek the support of their colleagues abroad to support the U.S. candidacy in various UNESCO elections. She also alluded to future areas where the commission could offer suggestions, such as proposing outstanding Americans to highlight the work and aims of UNESCO by serving as UNESCO [Goodwill Ambassadors](#), [Artists for Peace](#), or [Champions of Sport](#).

Members of the public also had the opportunity to speak to the National Commission and Ambassador Louise Oliver.

The public citizens who made comments were:

Sidney Passman on extra-budgetary support for the UNESCO Natural Science and Engineering sector;
Patrice Lyons on creating a broadly representative World Digital Library subcommittee of the National Commission;
Bill Holloway on a University of California Santa Barbara program on global studies being a potential source of interns for within the UNESCO community;
Joan Challenor on supporting the U.S. and non-governmental organization participation at the WSIS conference in Tunisia this autumn;

Ray Wanner on the World Digital Library being a great public diplomacy platform, which could have an effect on the “digital divide.”

In response to the public comments and questions, Ambassador Oliver thanked those who spoke for their comments and noted that it is valuable to hear from people who were formerly involved in UNESCO.

Oliver said that UNESCO must prioritize resources and eliminate ineffective programs. She said that the U.S. private sector, as opposed to the U.S. government, could be a resource for extra-budgetary funding, and that extra-budgetary money should be given to programs supporting UNESCO’s core areas. She reiterated her support for cross-sectoral projects.

Further summaries and information on the subject area and plenary sessions, will be available on the Commission website.

U.S. Candidacy for World Heritage Committee

The U.S. has announced its candidacy for the World Heritage Committee (WHC), the governing body of the World Heritage Convention. The election will occur in October 2005 at the General Assembly of States Parties held in conjunction with the UNESCO General Conference in Paris.

The WHC is comprised of 21 elected representatives from countries that have signed the Convention. Among its several responsibilities, the Committee maintains the [World Heritage List](#), evaluates new applications and monitors the care of World Heritage Sites. Terms on the WHC are six years; however, since 2001 the general practice has been for members to step down after four years.

Currently, 180 countries are signatories to the Convention, and 812 sites are inscribed on the World Heritage List. The U.S. has 18 World Heritage sites, ten natural and eight cultural. Two additional natural sites are jointly administered with Canada. All but three of the U.S. sites are units of the National Park Service.

The U.S. is committed to maintaining the high standards of the [World Heritage List](#). The U.S. expertise in public-private partnerships can be useful in developing partnership programs for World Heritage. The long history of involvement of the U.S. in the World Heritage program and U.S. expertise in protecting and managing both natural and cultural sites will also be an asset to the WHC. During its absence from UNESCO the U.S. remained committed to the World Heritage Convention. The U.S. has also served three terms on the WHC over the past three decades.

UNESCO's World Heritage Convention seeks to identify, protect and preserve cultural and natural heritage of outstanding universal value. The U.S. was a major architect of this convention and the first to sign and ratify it in 1973.

Francesco Bandarin Visit

On May 31, members of the U.S. National Commission for UNESCO met with Francesco Bandarin, Director of UNESCO's World Heritage Center, for an informal briefing on the World Heritage Program.

Mr. Bandarin highlighted the long involvement of the U.S. in the World Heritage program, even during the U.S. absence from UNESCO.

Currently, there are [18 World Heritage sites in the U.S.](#), ten natural and eight cultural with two additional natural sites being jointly administered with Canada. The majority of U.S. sites are on federal land, administered by the National Park Service.



Inscribed in 1979, the Everglades is one of the sites in the US. *source: National Park Service*

Worldwide there are 812 World Heritage sites. Mr. Bandarin acknowledged that a disproportionate number are cultural sites: 628 out of 812. He noted, however, that natural sites tend to be much larger in size.

Distribution of World Heritage sites is also disproportionate among geographic regions of the world. Currently 50.6 percent of sites are in Europe and North America; 20 percent are in Asia and the Pacific; 13.9 percent are in Latin America; 8 percent are in Africa; and 7.5 percent are in Arab states. The distribution is shifting, however, as the concept of a heritage site evolves, he said. The program is now broadening the definition of heritage site to include historic routes such as the Inca Trail, pre-historic sites such as the Alte Rio in Argentina, and cultural landscapes such as the terraced farming in South East Asia, Bardarin stated. Countries in Asia and Africa are more recent signatories to the Convention and are now working to add additional sites in their countries.

Threats to World Heritage Sites include political instability, urbanization, pollution, and excessive tourism among others, he said. The World Heritage Center helps state parties manage their sites through preparatory assistance, technical cooperation, training and emergency assistance and educational and promotional activities. The Center then works with state parties to monitor their sites, Bardarin stated.

According to Bandarin, the World Heritage Center is now working to strengthen its programs by incorporating World Heritage into larger development plans and through partnerships with the private sector.

International Oceanographic Committee

The [23rd Session of the Assembly of the Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission](#) (IOC) took place June 20-30 at UNESCO Headquarters. The assembly of 132 IOC member states ran in parallel with five working groups and three inter-sessional committees: finance, elections, and resolutions.

During the Assembly, the U.S. was elected to the IOC Executive Council and as a Vice Chair of the International Global Oceans Observation System (GOOS) Steering Committee. The U.S. delegation included representatives from the Environmental Protection Agency, the U.S. Navy, the National Oceanographic and Atmospheric Agency, the U.S. Department of State.

The Assembly focused on issues related to development and implementation of the GOOS, tsunami warning systems, capacity building, and program budgets.

Launching the Indian Ocean Tsunami Warning and Mitigation System (IOTWS) was a priority for the Assembly. A key resolution affirmed that IOTWS would be a coordinated network of national systems and capacities, and part of a global network of early warning systems for all ocean-related hazards.

Under the resolution, each member state will be responsible for issuing warnings in its own territories. Members agreed to share tsunami-relevant, real-time observational data. Although no single coordinating center has been identified, an Intergovernmental Coordination group comprised of IOC member states and observers was formed to coordinate activities ranging from technical data exchange and research to implementation.

Overall, the Assembly resolutions position the global early-warning system to work within the Global Earth Observation System of Systems (GEOSS), an effort supported by 60 countries, the EU, and 40 international organizations to link space, land, and ocean-based observations. Within this framework, multiple countries will be able to share resources and expertise to develop national early warning systems.

Two adopted resolutions included U.S. proposals to encourage support of GOOS implementation through the IOC capacity building initiative and IOC participation in UNESCO's cross-sector capacity building initiative.

NASA and UNESCO

In June, Ron Birk, NASA's program director for Applied Sciences met with representatives of UNESCO's Ecological and Earth Sciences Division for exploratory discussions on the use of NASA "remote sensing" technology and data for education and applications focused projects.

The [recent MOU between NASA and UNESCO](#) focuses on acquisition of baseline environmental information about World Heritage and biosphere reserve sites. NASA is interested in use of World Heritage and biosphere reserve sites both for calibrating and evaluating new instruments and for developing decision support tools which utilize remote sensing derived inputs such as land cover, surface water extent, flooding and soil moisture. UNESCO seeks to incorporate NASA's measurements in educational programs, for the management of World Heritage and biosphere reserves, and for IHP and IOC related programs.

Creative Cities – Santa Fe New Mexico

Santa Fe, New Mexico has recently been designated a UNESCO Creative City in Folk Art and Design. It is the first American city given the designation through UNESCO's Creative Cities Network.

Established in 2004 the [Creative Cities Network](#) aims to ensure diversity in cultural goods and services at the national and international level by assisting cities in developing their creative industries.



An example of the art and architecture of Santa Fe, New Mexico. *source:* Santa Fe Properties, Inc.

Cities apply to become part of the network in literature, cinema, music, folk art, design, media arts and/or gastronomy. Cities can work to further develop their creative industries through the expertise and assistance of other cities in the network.

Santa Fe is unique in its designation as both a Folk Art and Design City. It currently hosts a Design Week and a Folk Art Market. Santa Fe joins Edinburgh, a literature city, as the first members of UNESCO's Creative Cities Network.

Young Professionals Program

As in 2004, the [Young Professionals Program](#) was extremely competitive this year. The commission received 156 applications for the program, of which 12 were forwarded to UNESCO headquarters for consideration by UNESCO for the ten available positions worldwide.

UNESCO External Relations and Cooperation

James Kulikowski, currently Deputy Director for Operations of the Office of Global Health Affairs at the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, has been hired by UNESCO to be the next Deputy Assistant Director-General for [External Relations and Cooperation](#), and Director for Relations with Member States and National Commissions

Starting in early August, he will be working directly with National Commissions, seeking to promote partnerships to further the joint interests of UNESCO and the National Commissions.

Job Vacancies

There are a variety of positions open in the UNESCO organization including: translators, general service, and professional posts. Professional posts (P) range from junior professionals P-1/P-2, to middle-ranking professionals P-3/P-4, to management professionals and directors P-5 and D-1/D-2.

Some positions listed on UNESCO's website <http://recrutweb.unesco.org/> include:

- [Director](#), UNESCO Liaison Office to U.N. (INN/RP/USA/BFC/0001) - (D-2) (New York, NY) (closing date: 20 Aug. '05)
- [Director](#), UNESCO International Institute for Higher Education in Latin America and the Caribbean (IESALC), (LA/RP/VEN/ED/0001) - (D-1) (Caracas, Venezuela) (closing date: 22 Aug. '05)
- [Regional Advisor](#), Social and Human Science in the Asia and Pacific Region, (AS/RP/THA/SHS/0003) - (P-5) (Bangkok, Thailand) (closing date: 6 Aug. '05)
- [Chief of Section](#), Section for Teacher Education, Division of Higher Education, Education Sector (ED-658) - (P-5) (Paris, France) (closing date: 1 Sept. '05)
- [Chief of Section](#), Section on Hydrological Processes and Climate, Division of Water Sciences, Natural Sciences Sector (SC-242) - (P-5) (Paris, France) (closing date: 4 Sept. '05)
- [Program Specialist](#) (Coordinator of the Capacity Building Program), International Bureau of Education (IBE/INN/IB/SWI/ED/0048) - (P-4) (Geneva, Switz.) (closing date: 12 Sept. '05)

